

# **Women & the Criminal Justice System**

## **Preventing Incarceration & Promoting Successful Reentry**

### **A Central Vermont Initiative**

#### **The Issue**

Women in Vermont are being incarcerated at an alarming rate – from 15 in 1985 to 33 in 1995 to 160 in 2005. We've seen an increase of 255% in the past 7 years. If this rate continues unabated, over 300 women will be in jail on an average daily basis in 2009. Additionally, 1000 women will be admitted to a correctional facility during 2005.

- 22% of Vermont's correctional population is women – national average is 17%
- 145 women are currently incarcerated – capacity is 128
- Women account for 26% of new cases for Corrections while rate for men has decreased
- The most frequently occurring crime for incarcerated women is false pretenses – for men, it's sexual assault on a minor
- 3% of the women in jail have felony convictions
- Of 85 sentenced women, 12 are in jail due to lack of a residence of 14% of the population while this compares to 7% for men
- 76% of the women have children & 20% came to prison pregnant
- 61% of the children were being cared for by family members & 37% were in the custody of the state

The human and financial consequences of this trend are significant. The cost to house these women will be substantial and will require continued diversion of state general funds from housing, transportation, medical services, education to corrections.

#### **The Charge**

The Secretary of the Agency of Human Services has charged agency staff along with the Regional Partnerships to provide local leadership with our communities to change this statewide trend. Our commitment is to alter the trend in the number of women incarcerated in Vermont without compromising community safety. The goal is to achieve a statewide 10% reduction in the number of women in jail within the next 2 years. At the same time, we want to address any short term changes we, as a community, can make over the next 6 months.

#### **The Opportunity**

Affecting the trend of incarceration rates for women benefits all of us and our communities. The central Vermont community has a rich history of collaboration and we call upon our communities, in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Human Services, to demonstrate that collaborative spirit again to address this challenging issue.

You're invited to participate in the development of a local plan to reduce the rate of incarceration without jeopardizing community safety and to promote the successful re-entry of women into their own community.

**Tuesday, June 14, 2005  
8:00 am to 12:00 noon  
Alumni Hall (next to the Barre Auditorium)  
Barre**

**(8:00 am registration & refreshments - the meeting will start promptly at 8:30 am)**

Thank you for letting us know if you're able to attend by contacting Vivian Cullen at [vcullen@cvcac.org](mailto:vcullen@cvcac.org) or Don Mandelkorn at [don.mandelkorn@dcf.state.vt.us](mailto:don.mandelkorn@dcf.state.vt.us). Let us know if you need accommodations or additional information about the meeting.

**Planning team members:**

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6/1/05